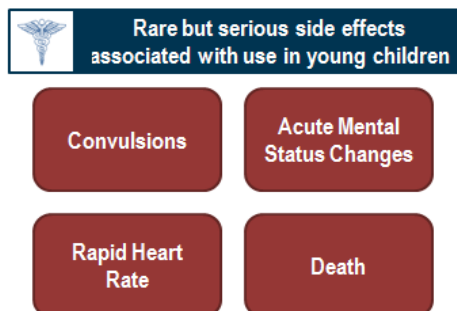


## Reducing Over-the-Counter Cough and Cold Medication Use in Children Under Four

Over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medications have received attention from numerous agencies warning against use in young children as they may result in rare but serious side effects including convulsions, rapid heart rate, acute mental status changes, and death.

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a public health advisory recommending that these medicines not be used in children under the age of two.
- The Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) announced voluntary actions to modify the product labels of these medications to state "do not use" in children under four years of age.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics lists administering cough and cold medicines for respiratory illnesses in children less than four years of age as one of the top five things physician and patients should question as part of the [Choosing Wisely](#) initiative.



As a result, the Health Analysis (HA) Department at the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) analyzed health data for beneficiaries across the Military Health System to determine the prevalence of this potentially harmful clinical practice.

**Data analysis indicated no apparent decline in cough and cold medication prescribing practices for children following FDA public health advisories issued in 2008.**



Equating to roughly  
**\$193,000**  
in unnecessary, and potentially harmful spending each year

### Top Conditions Generating Prescriptions

Acute upper respiratory infections

6,339

Acute nasopharyngitis (common cold)

1,105

Cough

948

Acute bronchitis and bronchiolitis

755

Bronchitis, not specified

718

Chronic pharyngitis and nasopharyngitis

690

Acute pharyngitis

450



### Note

OTC cough and cold medicines are frequently used to treat the symptoms of the common cold such as sore throat, coughing or sneezing, chills, and fever.

However, evidence suggests that OTC cough and cold medicines are NOT effective in making children well sooner.

It is important to note that these products only treat the symptoms and children will likely get better with time.

<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/DrugSafetyPodcasts/ucm077929.htm>

**Improving compliance with established guidelines has the potential to **reduce** the risk for serious side effects among children and generate **cost savings** across the services.**

For more information on this analysis or the Health Analysis Department, please contact us at [health-analysis@nmcphc.med.navy.mil](mailto:health-analysis@nmcphc.med.navy.mil).



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